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# How Did Coalitions Form During the Civil Rights Era In Mississippi?

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# How Did Coalitions Form During the Civil Rights Era In Mississippi?



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## Introduction

Over the past century, African Americans took part in building organizations to bring about equal rights and social change. Many organizations formed before Jim Crow but reached prominence during the Civil Rights Movement. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s was built on long-term strategies for gaining the right to vote, education, housing, and freedom from discrimination. Through organized nonviolent protests, the Civil Rights Movement broke the pattern of segregation at a national level through the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

African American groups came together to combat racism and inequalities. Prior to the Civil Rights Era, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded in 1909 to advance justice for Black people. Another organization, founded in 1957, was the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) established by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), founded in 1942, got excited about student activism and invited students to form their own organization called the Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee (SNCC) founded in 1960. These organizations came together in a Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) by 1962 in Mississippi.



## Methods

During this course of research, I examined primary source texts and archives and visited historical sites to gain a more detailed understanding of how the major coalitions in Mississippi ran as a unified organization. The goal of this research was to learn more about my personal identity and its association with a critical moment in time. The Council of Federated Organization was a successful example of a equal-rights coalition; COFO's success is a testament to the ability of multiple organizations overcoming collective action problems. The historical documentation added to the knowledge of the research as each archive gave detail on the atmosphere of the Civil Rights era.

## Results

### Historical Documents

#### • NAACP Membership Sign-up slips, 1960s

Civil rights organizations supported the NAACP Membership campaign by joining the NAACP

#### • Bob Kennedy Letter, 1961

Letter written to Bob Kennedy, the attorney general, asking not to interfere with life in the south and instead focus on national and foreign affairs

#### Freedom Summer Memos ,1964

Memos for the Summer program that involved massive participation of Americans dedicated to the elimination of racial oppression, projects were sponsored by COFO and took place in various counties in Mississippi

#### • Freedom Summer Applications, 1964

Applications were submitted by over 1,000 White Americans who wanted to become apart of the freedom summer project. Applicants were required to list prior arrests, contact names for bonds, and a \$150 fee to finance the summer project

#### • SNCC Research Census Holmes County,1965

The Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee conducted their own census for Holmes County in Mississippi. There was detailed data on country populations in MS, annual family incomes, occupations of black workers, and eligibility of voters in the county

#### • NAACP Letters, 1966

Letter written from NAACP branch in Hattiesburg,MS that addressed a complaint about discriminatory practices against one of its members

#### • NAACP Minutes, 1966

An overview of recommendations being made for communities, campaign planning, complaint sharing, and freedom fund letters

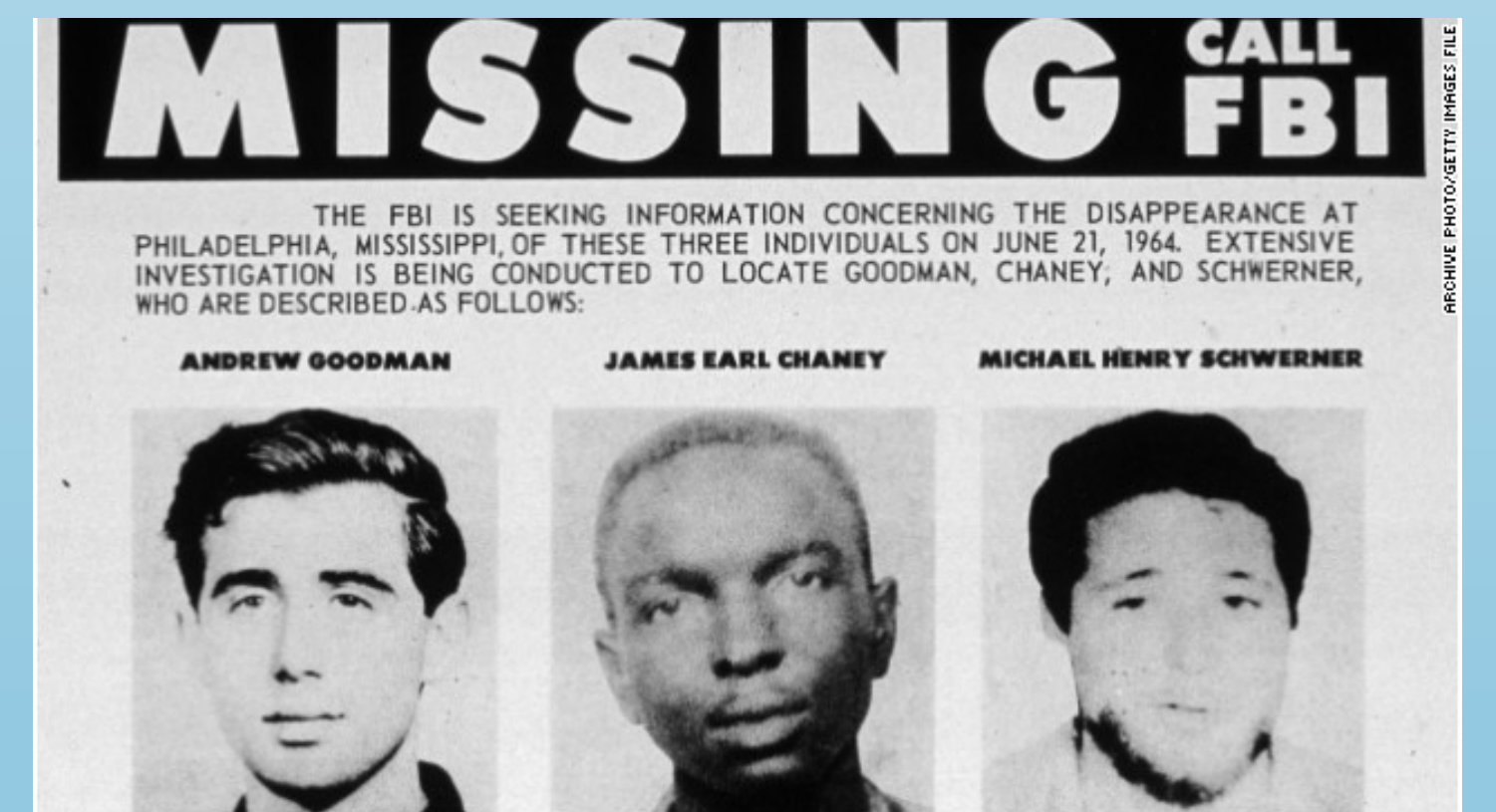
#### • Martin Luther King Jr Obituary, 1968

A copy of Martin Luther King Jr's obituary was given to the Special collections library at University of Southern Mississippi



## Discussion

The results of the study solidify the hardship and oppression that had to be endured by African Americans during the Civil Rights Era. Racial tension in Mississippi was transparent in both a social and psychological way. After the journey of spending time at the special collections libraries in both Mississippi and New York, my life changed in the best way. My perspective and insight on the Civil Rights Era continued to build as each document connected to another. The efforts made by African Americans is unmatched. In many instances, Black History is muted and continues to be hidden in places like the special collections libraries. The topic of African American history, in general, deserves more respect and acknowledgement; this information should be in classroom textbooks. Society has either forgotten or does not want to admit that Black History is American History too. So many students and scholars are unaware of the hardships that Black Americans had to undergo just to be gain human rights. The coalition efforts taught us that there is power in numbers. The Freedom Summer taught Black Mississippians that there were people in the world who were willing sacrifice their life to help Black citizens earn the right to vote.



## Acknowledgements

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